

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SEOUL 01404 210731Z  
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00  
USIE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 VO-05 INSE-00 CA-01 EUR-12  
CU-04 SCS-06 /083 W  
-----104438 210738Z /17

O P 210704Z FEB 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9417  
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1404

TOKYO FOR USIA

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SOPN, KS, US, PINS  
SUBJECT: FREE LANCE CORRESPONDENT JOHN SAAR

1. EMBASSY PRESS OFFICER WAS CONTACTED LATE EVENING FEBRUARY 19 BY JOHN SAAR, FORMER WASHINGTON POST NORTH ASIA CORRESPONDENT, WHO IS NOW FREELANCING. SAAR CALLED FROM KIMPO AIRPORT TO REQUEST EMBASSY ASSISTANCE. HE HOLDS A BRITISH PASSPORT BUT IS MARRIED TO AN AMERICAN AND HAS PERMANENT RESIDENCE STATUS. HE HAD ARRIVED IN KOREA ON ASSIGNMENT FOR A GERMAN PUBLICATION, GEO MAGAZINE. ROKG IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS TOLD HIM ON ARRIVAL HE WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER KOREA.

2. IN HIS INITIAL CONTACT WITH EMBOFF, SAAR ASKED EMBASSY TO INTERVENE IN CASE. HE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED HIS TRIP TO KOREA WITH ROKG OFFICIALS IN NEW YORK AND HAD NOT BEEN TOLD DEFINITELY WHETHER HE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE ROK. HE ATTRIBUTED THE ROKG REFUSAL TO ADMIT HIM TO HIS PREVIOUS COVERAGE OF KOREA AS A WASHINGTON POST REPORTER.

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3. EMBOFF CONFIRMED THAT SAAR WAS TRAVELING ON A BRITISH PASSPORT AND POINTED OUT THAT EMBASSY COULD NOT LEGALLY INTERVENE IN A CASE INVOLVING CONTROL OF ENTRY INTO A COUNTRY, ANY MORE THAN OTHER GOVERNMENTS COULD INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN INS DECISIONS.

4. ROKG ALLOWED SAAR TO OVERNIGHT IN SEOUL AND PUT HIM ON A RETURN FLIGHT TO TOKYO. SAAR CALLED EMBOFF AGAIN JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE TO REPEAT HIS REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE AND WAS AGAIN TOLD THAT THE EMBASSY COULD NOT FORMALLY INTERVENE.

5. FYI. WHILE SAAR WAS AT HIS HOTEL IN SEOUL HE TALKED WITH NBC TV REPORTER JIM LAURIE, LOCAL NEW YORK TIMES REPRESENTATIVE, AND POSSIBLY OTHER U.S. REPORTERS. NBC AND NEW YORK TIMES HAVE CONTACTED EMBASSY TO CLARIFY NON-INTERVENTION POLICY, INDICATING SOME PRESS PLAY OF INCIDENT IS POSSIBLE. MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION REPORTEDLY TOLD SAAR AND INQUIRING U.S. REPORTERS THAT SAAR WAS DENIED ENTRY BECAUSE HIS REPORTING WAS "BIASED, UNFRIENDLY, AND DAMAGING TO ROK".

6. COMMENT: WHAT SAAR OF COURSE DID NOT KNOW IS THAT BOTH AMBASSADOR AND I HAD RAISED ISSUE (TEN DAYS AGO) OF VISA ISSUANCES WITH HIGH LEVEL ROK OFFICIALS, POINTING OUT DAMAGE DENIAL MIGHT DO TO ROK IMAGE. I REPEATED POINT TO VICE MINISTER KIM DONG WHEI LAST NIGHT, BUT ROK ADAMENT THAT SAAR WAS AN UNFRIEDNLY CORRESPONDENT WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE WAS TO WRITE UNFRIENDLY ARTICLES.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
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